

Scientific Support to Assessment and Evaluation of Minimum Standard for Prison Library Collections and Prisoner Reading Activities in Bulgaria: Technical Report for the UIL Library in UNESCO Institute for Lifelong Learning (UIL), Hamburg, Germany

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Preprint / Preprint

Arbeitspapier / working paper

Empfohlene Zitierung / Suggested Citation:

Tsvetkova, M., & Andrekova, S. (2018). *Scientific Support to Assessment and Evaluation of Minimum Standard for Prison Library Collections and Prisoner Reading Activities in Bulgaria: Technical Report for the UIL Library in UNESCO Institute for Lifelong Learning (UIL), Hamburg, Germany*. Sofia. <https://nbn-resolving.org/urn:nbn:de:0168-ssoar-60096-7>

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Scientific Support to Assessment and Evaluation of Minimum Standard for Prison Library Collections and Prisoner Reading Activities in Bulgaria

Technical Report

Title: Scientific Support to Assessment and Evaluation of Minimum Standard for Prison Library Collections and Prisoner Reading Activities in Bulgaria: Technical Report for the UIL Library in UNESCO Institute for Lifelong Learning (UIL), Hamburg, Germany. Sofia, Bulgaria, 05.11.2018.

Data registered as to November 1st, 2018

Data Source: Ministry of Justice of the Republic of Bulgaria, Directorate “Execution of Punishments”

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Abstract: The report was prepared at the request of the UIL Library in UNESCO Institute for Lifelong Learning (UIL), Hamburg, Germany. The authors would like to thank the Directorate “Execution of Punishments” of the Ministry of Justice of the Republic of Bulgaria for the collection of the field data. They would also like to thank the Sofia University Science Fund for the research grant (contract No 80-10-9/16.04.2018) that made this report possible. The funder had no role in study design, data collection and analysis, decision to publish, or preparation of the manuscript. The findings and opinions expressed here do not necessarily reflect the position or policies of the Ministry of Justice of the Republic of Bulgaria. This report may be quoted or abstracted with proper citation.

Keywords: prison libraries, prison literacy, prison education, prisons, prisoners, reading in prison, access to books, books to prisoners, Bulgaria

Introduction

This exploration aimed at demonstrating the importance of reading behind bars, to elaborate on the statistical aspect of data on the prison libraries in Bulgaria – using quantitative sociological research and could assist the comparative statistical analysis.

Highlights

In 2018 in Bulgaria there are 36 penitentiary establishments, as follows: 12 prisons, 4 open-end prison hostels, 2 reformatories (juvenile correctional facilities) and close-end 18 prison hostels.

The total number of prisoners in Bulgaria on 1st November 2018 is 6689. Compared with the earlier report the total number of prisoners on 1st November 2015 is 7238.¹

The total number of prison libraries in Bulgaria on 1st November 2018 is 36. Compared with the earlier report the total number of prison libraries on 1st November 2015 is 18.²

There are schools in all prisons in Bulgaria. There are schools in all prisons in Bulgaria. At the beginning of the school year 2018/2019, prisoners included in the education process in the country comprise 1,170 people, of whom 130 are in the first grade.

Prison library policy is regulated by The Law on Execution of Punishments and Remand Detention, Art. 165, para 1 and 2 (official SG. 25 of 2009; amend., suppl. No. 63 by 2017) and also in its Implementation Guidelines, Art. 154 (official SG. 9 of 2010; amend., suppl. No. 14 by 2017).

In Accordance to provisions of Art. 165, para 1 and 2 of the Bulgarian Law On Execution Of Punishments And Remand Detention (official SG. issue 25, 2009; amend., suppl. No. 63, 2017) there should be a library in each prison, prison hostel and reformatory (juvenile correctional facility) in Bulgaria; all prisoners should have an access to the respective library.

Bulgarian Law on Execution of Punishments and Remand Detention (2009) assigns the independent observation and control over the prisons, includingly the prison libraries, to the so-called Municipal Monitoring Committees, under the local

¹ Tsvetkova, Milena, Andrekova, Sashka. The right to read behind bars: Access to books and libraries in the prisons in Bulgaria. Russian Journal of Sociology, 2016, Vol. 4, Is. 2, pp. 62-73. DOI: 10.13187/rjs.2016.4.62

² Tsvetkova, Milena, Andrekova, Sashka. The right to read behind bars: Access to books and libraries in the prisons in Bulgaria. Russian Journal of Sociology, 2016, Vol. 4, Is. 2, pp. 62-73. DOI: 10.13187/rjs.2016.4.62

Municipality Councils. In the year of 2009 the Bulgarian Helsinki Committee drew up a Questionnaire, entitled „Information concerning the penitentiary establishments (prisons and prison hostels)“, which has to serve the needs of the Municipal Monitoring Committees during their visits in the penal institution.³ Question „Resocialization Activities“ includes: number of libraries, number of books, new completions of library funds; the share of people using the library; description of the periodicals, available in the library.

Prison libraries are funded by the Ministry of Justice of the Republic of Bulgaria, Directorate “Execution of Punishments”.

Library funds are replenished and refreshed in three main channels: (a) state budgeting, (b) private persons (private donations) and (c) donations by NGOs and public donation campaigns.

There is no interlibrary lending scheme for prison libraries in Bulgaria.

In persuasion of Art. 154, para 1 and 2 of the Implementation Guidelines of the Law on Execution of Punishments and Remand Detention (2009), prison libraries should be maintained and nourished as in respect to the established rules and practice of the public libraries.

Unfortunately, there is no active cooperation between public libraries and prisons libraries in Bulgaria. Such a cooperation is not regulated by the Bulgarian Law On Public Libraries (official SG. 42 of 2009, amend., supplement. No. 89 by 2018). The single study of prison libraries in Bulgaria, ever since 1989 till today⁴, registered the fact that from the totality of 13 prisons only two (in Lovech and Stara Zagora) are in some interactions with the city public library; anyway, such an activity is not a part of the national strategy but depends on the decision, made by the management of these prisons, and also it is just for the purposes of some cultural festivities and events and not to increase the chance the prisoners to select books and other reading materials.

The only professional library association in this country, the Bulgarian Library and Information Association (BLIA), does not have a section in regard to the prison libraries (reciprocal to the IFLA Section for Library Services to People with Special Needs) and there is no any expert in the respective field in this country at all.

Alarming fact is that public libraries do not investigate the category of readers in the prison, considering that many of the prisoners in the ordinary life have never been readers of a public library. This is not only a Bulgarian problem, but finding, displayed in the preface of the international “Guidelines for library services to prisoners” of IFLA (1995).

The libraries have books and reading materials of all kinds: legal publications, dictionaries, religious books, children literature, poetry, love stories,

³ BHC. Handbook for Municipal monitoring committees activities. Sofia: Bulgarian Helsinki Committee, 2009, pp. 33-39. [in Bulgarian]

⁴ Tsvetkova, Milena, Andrekova, Sashka. The right to read behind bars: Access to books and libraries in the prisons in Bulgaria. Russian Journal of Sociology, 2016, Vol. 4, Is. 2, pp. 62-73. DOI: 10.13187/rjs.2016.4.62

detective and history novels, history, psychology, newspapers and magazines (BUT mostly they are rather old, out of fashion and physically amortized copies).

The right to read religious books is regulated by the Bulgarian Law on Execution of Punishments and Remand Detention, Art. 166, par. 1 (official SG. 25 of 2009; amend., supplem. No. 63 by 2017).

The national and international legal acts, regulating the penal execution activities, should be set in the prison library and placed at prisoners' disposal.

Concerning the needs of reading material in the prisons in Bulgaria, the following conclusions can be formulated:

- At the discretion of the administration, all prisons need fiction, except one – the Sofia prison;
- At the discretion of the administration of the prisons, specialized publications for library reading (other than fiction) need only 6 prisons – these are the prisons in Belene, Burgas, Bobovdol, Varna, Pleven and Stara Zagora;
- Need of legal publications have only 4 prisons in Bulgaria – these are the prisons in Belene, Burgas, Varna and Bobovdol.

Decisions with regards to library matters (for example, how many books to order and how long an inmate can keep a book) depends on the internal rules fixed in the Implementation Guidelines for Internal Prison Order.

The visits to the prison library should be carried out according to a schedule confirmed by the head of the respective institution. This schedule is an integral part of the prisoners' timetable.

All prisoners have an access to the prison library – once per week, at least. Life-long prisoners may get books from the library after a preliminary request and in a special high security zone. Access to the library is direct (walk in), without online catalogue.

Prisoners can receive reading material via prison-mail or through visitation but not be able to request books that are not available at the library.

The position of librarian could be occupied by a prisoner, under administrative supervision – after a preliminary passed contest. The Directorate "Execution of Punishments" of the Ministry of Justice has drawn the so-called Official File of the Librarian position in the prisons.

The prison libraries are headquarters of the editorial stuffs of the six Bulgarian prison newspapers:

- 1) "Brod" (Cross) Newspaper – published by the prisoners from Sofia Prison;
- 2) "Zaedno" (Together) Newspaper – published by the prisoners from Vratsa Prison;
- 3) "Horizonti" (Horizons, Skylines) Newspaper – published by the prisoners from Varna Prison;

- 4) "Kaylashki Vesti" (Kaylak News) Newspaper – published by the prisoners from Pleven Prison;
- 5) "Bez Ime" (Without Name) Newspaper – published by the prisoners from Pleven Prison;
- 6) "Delnik" (Workday) Newspaper – published by the prisoners from Belene Prison.

The following conditions have negative influence on the usage of the available prison library collections in Bulgaria:

- a) The state of the library collections – books, morally and physically out of fashion, out of use information resources, most of them are from before 1989; considerable part of the library funds are amortized because of intensified book turnover or because of lack of book protection habits and culture;
- b) Formal completeness of the library fund in the prisons. The main way to supply books are the donations but they are often sporadic act of "awakened conscience", an instrument for demonstrative political action, casual gesture or a dole "out of pity";
- c) Poor quality of the donated books. Those donations are mainly from closed libraries in various state institutions, i.e. we are talking about old books with outdated content. The other kind of donations are from publishers whose generosity is associated with excess and obsolete specialized publications that cannot be interesting for the convicted;
- d) Decrease of the prison population;
- e) Big number of prisoners who work and in the same time many illiterates among the non-working ones;
- f) The average number of prisoners between 40 and 70 per cent are people of primary or secondary illiteracy and this is linked to the lack of interest to the general education;
- g) An increase of the young illiterate prisoners can be observed.

The prisoners in Bulgaria are stimulated to take part in various cultural and information activities of the prison libraries, such as:

- 1) reading clubs, book discussion clubs, creative writing and literature clubs;
- 2) workshops or conferences devoted to renown Bulgarian and foreign writers, poets, scientists, etc.;
- 3) any kind of festivity – days, competitions, devoted to the individual creative activity of the prisoner, especially in the field of essay, poem, short-story writing arts;
- 4) any other activities, popularizing book publishing in the different fields of knowledge and culture.

Bulgarian prison libraries are not involved in cultural or societal activities outside prison.

In Bulgaria there are no statistics on results of the impact prison library has had on inmates or ex-prisoners.

No observation is carrying and no recording of such a statistics by the state agent, namely the Directorate "Execution of Punishments", Ministry of Justice of the Republic of Bulgaria and also by the Council of Execution of Punishments that is the consultative institution under the Ministry of Justice and has a function to organize and hold studies and researches in respect to the penalty executions (as in accordance to the Guidelines for the Organization and Functions of the Council of Execution of Punishments, publ. SG, issue 97/ 08.12.2009).

We are presenting a detailed overview of the prison libraries in Bulgaria as in respect to the available library book collections, average number of reading persons per year, preferable reading materials and literary genres, most active readers among the prisoners, encouraging reading and library visitation stimuli.

The indicated quantitative data could not be categorically taken and they are not considered constant variables; the reasons for this are: high dynamics of the prison population (unceasing flow of in- and outcomers); sentence differences; volume dynamics of the very library collections, etc.

Overview

Belene Prison

The library in this prison has at its disposal about 16,200 volumes.

Most of the books (near 10 per cent) are old and non-actual editions (works of political leaders and thinkers from the socialist regime such as Todor Zhivkov, Lenin, Karl Marx and Friedrich Engels, socialist political economy etc.). Basically the books, available, are editions, published before 1989 – Bulgarian authors (about 60 per cent); Russian classics and Soviet literature (about 30 per cent), European and World authors (about 10 per cent). Bigger portion of the Bulgarian section consists of analyses and works that are difficult to be understood in today times – of authors, hard to be understood or unreadable at all, such as Georgi Dzhagarov, Stoyan Ts. Daskalov, Kamen Zidarov, Slav Hristov Karaslavov and memories of people from the so-called partisan movement – anti-governmental, illegal communist movement in the 1940s. The books, published after 1990, are less than 3 per cent. A considerable portion of its funds are amortized because of intensified book turnover or because of lack of book protection habits and culture. The requirements to the users of the library collection and the control are increased, but library still needs to be supplied with new editions.

Some cares are taken for the available library collection as on behalf of the librarian and also from the prison management. The needed materials for binding, stitching and recovering of the separate individual volumes are provided. Donators are found out as well. Library collection is thematically organized.

The readers' number varies and depends on the number of the actual prisoners. Around 300 readers are registered and usually there are 5–10 in the zone

of high security. Some years ago book users have been more than 420–450 prisoners. In the recent years there is a tendency of decrease of the interest and the reason for that trend is in the decrease of the prison population and the increase of the young illiterate people. As an average, around 100–120 books are lending per month and this means that the readers are around 30–35 per month.

The main reader interest is directed to the criminal literature. There is one more reader's group – they are interesting in history (adventure or fantasy versions), poetry, politics, classic literature, fine arts, building construction. There is interest to dictionaries and phrase-books – Bulgarian-English, Bulgarian-German, Bulgarian-Spanish but there has been none such in the library.

Measures, undertaken to encourage reading and stimulating the use of library collection:

- Lectures, causeries, special courses in film lecturing and various culture-information events. The prisoners are getting explanations how to obtain full and exact, correct information on different issues and various items from the diverse editions in the prison library. In advance of the quiz shows organized in the institution, the management announces the fields of knowledge which will be reflected in the quiz questionnaires and gives preliminary information concerning the specific literary genres and the particular literature works that should be used in order the people to pick up the needed information and to prepare for their participation in the respective competitions.

- Belene Prison organizes a competition between all prisons in this country for writing an original author's essay. The winners have gotten an honorary diploma and a book.

- The Big Reading Project – readings of literary works by Bulgarian authors. The first step was to make a casting of all persons who wish to take part in the event; the second was to form a group of common interests in the field of the Bulgarian fictional literature. The restrictions of the requirements for participation are in respect of a good intellectual commands and serious attitude for a creative activity. The competition has been held out in a contesting format between all institutions of that type in Bulgaria and the awards are books. As a structure The Big Reading Project consists of elements of group-work and team building communication; there were some participation lists and personal files in order to register and to keep an eye on the specific interests of each single individual participant. Once per week during a whole calendar year a group of 14 prisoners is gathering in the library. During these meetings each participant has to present a Bulgarian literary work, that he has voluntarily selected on a random principle. The rest of the participants should ask questions, to analyze, to debate, read, retell or recite selected extracts as an illustration of their personal opinions and theses. After the project ended, the organizers register positive results, demonstration of interest and readiness of other prisoners to take part in such activity.

Bobovdol Prison

Library collection in the Bobovdol Prison gets new books on a relatively regular base in accordance to the opportunities of the Directorate “Execution of Punishments”, some of the books are coming from NGOs and private donors.

At this moment the library contains around 7000 volumes, mostly old editions, published before 1989. In 2015 the library collection was renovated due to a donation of 44 books. The books from the Library collection are classified in sections and in alphabetic order. Forthcoming is a procedure of discarding a bigger portion of the library fund because of ‘wearing out’ of the books and because of many old editions still included, which are not attractive for today’s readers.

The library is getting some periodicals such as “The Church Newspaper”, “Muslims Magazine”, newspapers published by other prisons.

There is a visiting hour schedule under which the prisoner can go to the library and it is an inseparable part of the timetable of the each individual.

The average number of reading prisoners is between 50 and 60 people per month. Two prisoners were registered by the observers as regular visitors.

The most preferred literary genre for reading is the criminal literature, followed by history and history novels, geography, classics and religions’ literature. A special interest is registered for the legal books, sociology and psychology; however, in respect to these fields the library is suffering a real lack of books and its fund is very very old and out of fashion.

The literary readings, organized in the Bobovdol Prison, are in respect to all national holidays and renown dates (the principle initiator of such activities in the locality is the collective team of Secondary School ‘Dr Peter Beron’); in 2018 there has been such an event under the slogan ‘Love, the Magic Reality’, dedicated to the Lovers Day, St. Valentine.

The **Samoranovo Prison hostel** also has its own library with around 420 volumes and 20 religious titles. On a regular base some more 50 books are received from the library of Bobovdol Prison, later they are to be replace by new ones and thus to vary the library collection. The average number of the readers is 11-12 prisoners per month.

Burgas Prison

The library in the prison institution of Burgas possesses some 11,000 volumes.

It works on the base of a timetable, preliminary confirmed by the prison management.

Usually there are around 50 prisoners who visit the library site each week. Annually it means more than 2400 visits. 40 prisoners are permanent readers and they make usually per four book requests each month.

Measures for encouraging reading and stimulating the use of library collection: literature reading clubs, in which eight prisoners are bounded up. There are some education studies in a format 2/2, i.e. daily per two hours twice per week; the participants are given some homework activities.

Varna Prison

Library collection of Varna Prison consists of around 11,700 volumes. The average number of reading persons is 200 prisoners and so.

In order to provoke and sustain the interest of the people in jail there are some competitions, organized for essay writing, author's poetry and prose texts in respect of various national holidays and anniversaries, even there are some competition in which the readers should prepare information, naturally with the support of the library resources, for participation in other intellectual activities such as lectures and public talks on various topics.

There are around 10 prisoners sentenced who are the most active readers amid the reading group as a totality.

Reading preferences concern the legal books, criminal novels, history and fairy-tales.

Measures for encouraging reading and stimulating the use of library collection are as follows: literature readings and different events such as selection and reading of the most interesting materials from the specially published at the spot the "Horizons" Newspaper, reading sessions for the best essays and poems written by the prisoners in respect to the national festivities, poetry events organized by the prisoners, participants in Poetry Club as well as literary readings devoted on the anniversaries of famous writers.

Vratsa Prison

The available library collection consists of around 3600 volumes, 45 magazine issues and 8 issues of the Law on Execution of Punishments and Remand Detention as well as the Guidelines for its implementation. Basically the fund is renewed by donations.

The average annual number of the reading persons is 220 prisoners. The most active readers are around 10–15 sentenced people. The number of the persons, actively using the library collection, is about 150.

Preferable reading materials are criminal and historic novels, fantasy and poetry and the Bulgarian poets are among the preferred authors in the last field.

Measures to encourage reading and to stimulate library collection usage are related to different events, organized by the management administrative stuff or by the Council of the collective body:

- Regular annual literary readings: on the occasion of June 2nd, the Day of Botev and of the town of Vratsa there is a regular annual competition for the most

expressive reading or recitation of Botev's poem. The reading event ends at the so-called big stage where the best reciters are invited to present their artistic skills. A jury of teachers from the prison school has to assess the achievements of the competitors. There are three prize awards. Because of the Lovers' Day, St. Valentine's Day, there is a special reading or recitation completion for romantic poetry and love lyrics.

- Literary competitions for essay, poem or short-story writings are organized as well. It is a usual practice, the best works to be published in the "Together" Newspaper.

To participate voluntarily in the jury, experts and public persons from the different institutions in the town are usually invited, such as librarians from the "Nadezhda" (Hope) Culture Centre, actors from the local Drama Theatre, activists of the Youth Centre. In this way the visibility and the notability of the activities gets higher importance and stimulates the prisoners to demonstrate higher degree of involvement and diligence.

The library is the home of the editorial team of the Together Newspaper. The prisoners have their 'stuff' meetings on a base of a schedule that is preliminary negotiated with the institution administration, and are regularly working for the monthly issues publication. At this moment the editorial team is of five prisoners and 10 constant contributors, reporters and/or correspondents.

In the year of 2013 a second library was established; its fund is possessed by the prison and it is situated in the yard of the prison. In this spot an active reading and study circle activities have been developed, they are in the framework of the "Uspeh" (Success) Project of the prison school.

Lovech Prison

In the prison of the town of Lovech the available library collection consists of 9500 volumes or so. They are structured as follows:

- in the main prison body – around 7600 volumes
- in Prison hostel Atlant – around 900 volumes
- in Prison hostel Veliko Tarnovo – around 900 volumes
- in Prison hostel Poligona – around 100 volumes

There are schedules, drawn out for the books consignment, but the interest is rather limited. In the main prison building between 30 and 50 prisoners pay interest and borrow books. The picture in the Prison hostel Atlant is almost the same – between 40–60 prisoners wish to read. In both prison hostels the number of the library facilities users is between 15 and 30 persons.

There are two basic circumstances as being influence factors towards the use of the available library collection:

- around 70 per cent of the prisoners are with primary or secondary illiteracy which is connected with the lack of education interests.

- the conditions of the very library collection – morally and physically old books and information resources.

The major source for books supply is donation activity. Such donations are coming basically from the closed libraries in different institutions; these are old stricken off books. The other source is consisted of donations from various publishing houses. However, they donate specially profiled literature or scientific editions that cannot be interesting for the sentenced persons.

Reading preferences in literary genres: criminal, love and history books.

There is a Book Friends Club in the main prison corpus. The meetings are organized for various holidays, anniversaries of famous writers, etc. There are between 10 and 15 sentenced in it.

Good communication is held on with the public library in Lovech. The librarians there are sending on a regular base some movies for special occasions.

Thanks to the Municipal Monitoring Committee in Lovech, there are good contacts with the culture house of the Radyuvene village. The amateur actors from the village are going to the prisoners with their spectacles and show programs produced for the occasion of various festivities.

Pazardjik Prison

The available library collection in the prison of Pazardjik consists of around 10,500 volumes.

The average number of reading persons is around 100, which means around one third of the total number prisoners in the main prison campus.

Preferable literary genre for reading are the criminal and historical novels.

There are five persons who could notified as the most reading people and as average per month they read around 10 books.

Measures for encouraging reading and stimulating the use of library collection are as follows:

- Literature readings by the students in the Training Centre; they aim is to popularize the Bulgarian literature and the common human values and this is usually done in the days of the national festivals;
- Celebration of the World Day of the Book;
- Essays competitions. For example, April 1st – the Humor and Joke Day, a competition is organized to write funny stories, jokes, anecdotes and the most ‘tailed’ lie. In respect to the Day of the Slavonic Letters and Culture there is another competition – to write an essay on a common topic, namely “May 24th – the Song of the Letters”.

In each of the above mentioned competitions there were between 4 to 11 prisoners. The first three winners in each of them were stimulated with moral and

object awards in accordance to the Law on Execution of Punishments and Remand Detention.

Pleven Prison

The library in the prison of Pleven consists of around 7800 volumes. In 2016 the library received 190 books from the Bulgarian Prosecutors Association via the donation action „Gift a book for a prison library”. This action was initiated by Social Activity and Educational Work Directorate of the Pleven Prison.

Active readers files are around 130. The average number of the reading sentence persons on an annual base is approximately around 500 prisoners and this means average of 10 persons per week.

The preferred reading literary genre is the criminal one. There are four persons who may be pointed as the most reading prisoners.

Measures, undertaken to encourage reading and stimulate the library visitations in the Pleven Prison, are as follows:

- literary readings in the club of interests, namely Literature Club;
- publishing two newspapers - “Bez Ime” (Without Name) and “Kailashki Novini” (Kaylak News) and in this activity the prisoners are using modern PC techniques donated by different individuals.

Prison hostel Pleven has a library collection of around 1400 books as volumes, used by the sentenced inhabitants of the institutions.

Plovdiv Prison

The library of the prison in Plovdiv consists of 12,100 volumes. In the prison structure there are two open-end prison hostels – **Prison hostel Smolyan** and **Prison hostel Hebros** which have their own autonomous libraries. The library collection of Prison hostel Hebros under Plovdiv Prison possesses around 2500 volumes. The library collection of Prison hostel Smolyan, under Plovdiv Prison, consists of around 4400 volumes.

The three libraries are not highly respected by the prisoners. In the main campus of Plovdiv Prison there are on the average around 15 prisoners who visit the library. In Prison hostel Hebros the number of the persons using books from the library are at an average 5 prisoners, and in Prison hostel Smolyan the reading persons are 10, at an average as well.

The preferences are as follows:

- In the main campus of the prison the people prefer criminal and fantasy books. The readers prefer to read short-stories and novelettes and some poem collections as well (primarily during the organized readings).
- In the open-end prison hostels preferable literary genre are fantasy and history books.

The most active users of the libraries sources are two prisoners from the main campus of the Plovdiv Prison, one – from the Prison hostel Hebros and two from Prison hostel Smolyan.

The weak usage of the libraries is because of the old fashioned library collection and the big number of the prisoners, who are working, while in the group of the non-working prisoners the percentage of the illiterates is very high. Such is the panorama in both open-end prison hostels and in the main campus of Plovdiv Prison.

Measures to encourage reading and stimulate the use of libraries are as follows: organization of recitals and literary readings for special occasions concerning eminent dates and national fests.

Some entertainment competitions are organized (includingly quiz shows) and in such cases, the prisoners alone prepare the questions and the logic tasks and this directs them to the library collection and its use.

Sliven Prison

The available library collection in the prison of Sliven consists of around 18,100 volumes.

The average number of the reading persons at annual basis is 1500, the average number of books borrowed is 5200 volumes per year.

Preferred reading literary genres are criminal and love novels, children literature and books of religious topics.

The measures for encouraging reading and stimulating the library visitations, are as follows:

- “Slovo” (Word) Literary Club;
- “Novi Drehi za Starite knigi” (New Cloths for the Old Books) – a campaign for binding the old books from the library in order to be used by the prisoners;
- “Procheti Me” (Read Me) – and exhibition of Bulgarian books;
- “Moyat Lyubim Literaturen Geroy” (My beloved Literary Character) – an inquiry and classification of the literary characters and competition for group projects – creation of posters, collages, miniature models of literary characters;
- “Podari Kniga na Bibliotekata” (Gift the Library With a Book) – charity campaign for administrators aiming to enrich the library collection for prisoners;
- Amateur theatre;
- Competitions for poetry recitation;
- Recitations because of special anniversaries – of national heroes and classic poets.

The school of the prison has a library of around 2100 volumes fund and they also can be used by the prisoners.

Sofia Prison

The Libraries in the **Central prison of Sofia, Prison hostel Kremikovtsi** and **Prison hostel Kazichene** are established in accordance to the regulations of the Law on Libraries.

There is an access to the prison library for all prisoners; it is regulated by the timetable schedule affirmed by the Head of the Prison.

There is a full-time working prisoner, who is responsible for the library collection and its use by the prisoners.

Attached to library of Sofia Prison there is a Legal library Section, supplied with computer and laptops and creating a chance for the classification of the national and international legal acts concerning the criminal-executive activity.

There are the so-called mini-libraries in Sofia Prison, attached to the clubs of the long-life sentenced persons groups, the groups of foreign citizens, and in the XII group. Their function is to organize readers' clubs. The books in them are donation of citizens, NGOs and institutions with which the prison is in cooperation.

There is a special film fund in all libraries, DVD players for the usage of these collections of popular movies in the leisure hours.

The prison library collection is of more than 10,000 volumes, totally. The fund consists of:

- Fictional literature – world bestsellers, criminal novels, adventures and love stories, fantasy, poems, prose etc.
- Documentaries and various documental works, including biography books and referred to the education process and the disciplines studies of history, geography, biology, chemistry, Bulgarian and Russian literature, English, German and others.
- Religious editions – special place for the religious literature, reflecting the essence of the various religions to which the prisoners belong.
- Periodicals – an interest for the prisoners are the newspapers and magazines which, however, are not actual and the available magazines are donations from the Bulgarian National Library and different NGO.

Around 45 prisoners are usually visiting the library per day. And in accordance to the Guidelines for Using the Library Facilities the standard for book lending is up to 3 books.

The number of the readers is on the average of more than 230 prisoners, defendants and accused.

It is registered that during the time of organizing various quiz shows and competitions, literary readings or history dates celebrations, the reading of books in the libraries is going up.

The library of **Prison hostel Kremikovtsi** has more than 6000 volumes. In literary genres the interest is as follows: criminal literature, fantasy, adventures,

love stories, history and scientific popular literature, classics, arts, sport, religion etc.

There is a timetable for the library visits which is confirmed by the prison management.

There are more than 150 prisoners as readers and the book exchange is of 32 books per person; among them there are some readers who have borrowed more than 120 books from various literary genres during one calendar year.

There is a full-time librarian, working in the library that is taking care of the book fund. The library is in a very good condition and there are many reading spots with makes an additional comfort.

The library of **Prison hostel Kazichene** consists of more than 4000 volumes of various fictional literature, classic Bulgarian and Russian literature, arts, religion, non-fiction, criminal and adventures.

In 2016 a new library was open, which is in a newly equipped premise. The old editions, published till 2000, which are 3400 volumes, now are separated.

Stara Zagora Prison

The library in Stara Zagora Prison consists of around 10,000 volumes.

The readers are at average of 250. Mostly readable are the criminal and love story books, the foreign fictional literature is preferred as well. A specific need is declared for the study of foreign languages but, because of the lack of enough education materials and dictionaries, the persons who want to develop this education activity are invited to take part in English and Russian courses, taught by prisoners who have excellent instruction skills in the respective language.

There is registered an increased interest to psychology books, related to Self-cognition, history literature and encyclopedia. A great interest is paid towards the scientific popular magazines such as National Geographic, 8 Magazine, GEO Magazine.

Recently the library collection is not renewed and for the supply of new books the people rely on voluntary donations and on charitable administrators.

On a regular base periodically the window display is actualized with newer editions or the most preferred books.

During the year a very good cooperation with the Municipal Public Library, named "Zahary Stoyanov", has been established.

Measures to encourage reading and stimulate the use of libraries are as follows:

- Reading Club, open in 2015. Main aim of this forum is to encourage reading and building of common human values via opening a space for sharing, discussions and meetings with different modern authors.

- Reading Marathon, organized each April 23rd, on the World Book and Copyright Day. It is a voluntary initiative and is organized in cooperation with the “Zahary Stoyanov” Public library in the cinema hall of its building as reading of texts from beloved books or authors.

The prisoners who are student in the Secondary School, named “Pop Mincho Ranchev”, have an access to the school library which has available 5000 volumes, preliminary textbooks, fiction and encyclopedias.

Reformatory Boychinovtsi (juvenile correctional facility)

In the Reformatory Boychinovtsi there is a functional library with 8600 volumes. It has fictional literature, scientific popular, religious and legal books. In the last years the books received are only from donations.

Having in mind the small number of the under-aged persons, accommodated in the Reformatory Boychinovtsi, and also their short stay in the institution, the average annual number of the readers is around 70. The inspectors who are forming the pedagogic stuff, responsible for the respective prisoners group, introduce them to the facilities of the library and the conditions under which they should visit it under a specially drawn out timetable.

Some of the under-aged prisoners prefer to read fairy tales, short stories because they are lighter as contents and easier to be made sense of them, and also having in mind the level of intellectual development and the deficits of the skills and capacities to assimilate new knowledge. Of special interest are the Bible proverbs. Fictional literature is also in the focus. Of special preference are the criminal and adventure books. The legal editions are used only in the library. The books of the „Student Library” is often used because the texts are usually taught in the regular literature classes and are needed for the preparation for matriculation exams.

Having in mind the fact that many boys who are coming to the Reformatory Boychinovtsi, are possessing a document for graduated an educational level or degree but de facto they are illiterates, the administration are reading them fairy tales. The group reading is practiced also by sentenced persons who are already with created reading skills.

In the end of the school year at first education level and for the Day of the Slavonic Letters and Culture, Mat 24th, a competition for most true and smooth reading is organized. There are prizes and awards at the end, and usually they are books. The most regular readers at this day are getting diplomas and the boys who have read the greatest number of books as well.

Conclusion

There is such a scientific category of “*prisoner reader*” and the knowledge for him is unjustly neglected and marginalized. It was found that prisoners accept positively the practices of reading in prison and the education through books. The

awareness that reading serious books is not an extra, but works in their favour to educate intensively and faster to change, is developed in the imprisoned.

The library collections of the prison libraries in Bulgaria have to rethink completely and reformat, not only to be updated. It does not require much additional funding but project thinking and creativity. As the study shows, the cooperation with the local “civil” library is not an exception. In addition to traditional celebrations and holidays, it is perfectly possible cooperation and exchange of books and other information resources between the two institutions. Since this will benefit both parties. The active role of the publishers should not be depreciated too. We assume that many publishing houses in Bulgaria would accept the mission to donate books to prisons but at this moment there is lack of awareness and leadership for such enthusiasm. Besides good PR, it would bring them tangible benefits – periodical cleaning of the obsolete books and editions that inside, in the places of imprisonment, would be taken more than well. We are sure that many NGOs could be involved (as they do it in some places at the moment too) in a long-term donation policy for the libraries in the prisons.